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DPI VISTA Monthly

Simply Sustaining Your Partnerships

By Ruth Anne Landsverk

Inside this issue:

VISTAs in the News	3
Recipe of the Month	3
Hey, that's a good idea!	3
VISTA to VISTA Interview	4-5
VISTA Event Calendar	7
Grant Opportunities	8

Just like Wisconsin's whooping cranes, the existence of a Partnership Action Team in some schools can become endangered or even extinct without a supportive "habitat." A survey of over 100 Connecticut schools found that Action Teams in one-third of the schools disappeared eight years after starting. The major culprit? Changes in school leadership.

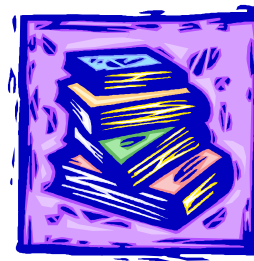
The National Network of Partnership Schools identified a well-organized Action Team as critical to sustaining a high-quality partnership program in schools. Here are some things departing VISTAs can do to keep the school's current principal informed and supportive of the Action Team, as well as lay the groundwork to help incoming VISTAs sustain partnerships, no matter who is school principal.

1. Leave your principal with a written summary of how Action Team decisions and activities connected to and helped advance school improvement goals. Did your Family Read-In tie in to helping 4th graders turn in more book reports? Did the interactive math homework help 2nd graders get faster at addition facts? Any numbers or positive testimony you collected from teachers and parents will be valuable fuel for your principal to keep school partnerships alive and well at the district level.

2. For the new VISTA, leave a "how-to" of your Action Team's accomplishments. What did you do this year? How did you do it? Who were the key people involved in making it happen? What programs or businesses funded activities? Your experi-

ences, thoughts, and any data you collected will be liquid gold to new VISTAs and/or other partnership advocates seeking to continue a good thing.

3. Display your district's Family Involvement Policy in a prominent place. This policy serves as a reminder that partnerships are not only beneficial to invest time and effort in, but are a board-authorized way of "doing business" with the people who schools exist for: children and their families. If your district doesn't have a policy, display your Action Team's answer to the question, "What do we believe and value about engaging parents in children's learning?"



4. Nail down dates and times with your principal for school staff to start 2010-11 with in-service training on partnerships and effective practices. In what areas did staff need more help with learning how to work with families? What goals or needs did teachers and parents on the Action Team identify to address next year? What impact do changes in school demographics have on partnerships? Leave time for teachers to share with each other successful ideas for working with families.

5. Recruit members of your Partnership Action Team to attend the Annual 2010 Parent Leadership Conference, slated for Sept. 29 at the Monona Terrace in Madison. If possible, bring all members, but at least make sure that your school or district is well-represented at the conference by having one member from each stakeholder group attend: a parent, a teacher, school principal, support staff member, a school board or community member and, possibly a student or two. It's much easier to enact and get support for partnership plans with several well-informed partnership advocates on board.

6. Disseminate meeting times, dates, and locations to Action Team members (including the principal) for 2010-11. Fill vacancies for the coming school year. Make sure members have each others' phone numbers and e-mail addresses to keep the lines of communication open during the summer. Sketch out a tentative agenda for the first meeting of the new school year, as well as a plan to get new members up to speed on the goals and history of your Action Team.

Some planning ahead and communicating on your part will make the incoming VISTA's transition much smoother. It will also help your school leader keep partnerships front and center in the minds of teachers and families, and continue the good work of your Action Team.

May your summer of 2010 be filled with happy memories!

Save the Dates!

July 15:

Quarterly Reports Due
Family Survey Reports Due

July 16:

VISTA Retreat @ Devil's Lake

July 31:

Last Day of Service for July-09' VISTAs

August 6:

Sustainability Worksheets Due



Becoming an AmeriCorps Alumnus

by Betsy Prueter



Come mid-August, twenty-one of you will have finished your VISTA service and moved on to jobs, graduate school, or more national service (some with our project! Hooray!). But you will all officially become AmeriCorps Alumni.

We certainly hope that you will continue to service in other capacities throughout your lives, whether that is with another year in AmeriCorps, through your local church, community non-profit, or in the public schools. We hope that the lessons you learned in VISTA and the experiences you had have inspired you to be mindful of the challenges and realities of poverty.

As you enter your post-VISTA life, keep in mind that there are several resources available to help you connect to other alums across the country (and in your local community)!

Official AmeriCorps Alumni website:

<http://www.americorpsalums.org/>

AmeriCorps Alumni Meetup Groups

<http://americorpsalumni.meetup.com/>

AmeriCorps Alumni on Facebook

<http://www.facebook.com/group.php?gid=23996685313>

VISTA on Facebook

<http://www.facebook.com/group.php?gid=2420329608>

AmeriCorps Alumni Resources from CNCS

http://www.americorps.gov/for_individuals/alumni/index.asp

Transition Tips from VISTA Campus

<http://vistacampus.org/mod/glossary/view.php?id=113>

Follow @americorpsalums on Twitter

<http://twitter.com/americorpsalums>

AmeriCorps Alumni Blog

<http://americorpsalums.wordpress.com/>

Career Advice on Jobs for Change

http://jobs.change.org/blog?author_id=241

In closing, I wanted to refer to a study published in May of 2009, by the Corporation for National and Community Service on the benefits of AmeriCorps service. Most assume it's those individuals and communities being served who benefit the most from the work of an AmeriCorps member. However, this study argues that the *AmeriCorps members themselves* are the largest beneficiaries of their own service investments. I hope that each of you has gained perspective, insight, and compassion from your year of service and will serve as lifelong ambassadors in your own communities for all national service programs. For those of you moving on, we will miss your very much and for those of you sticking around, it's going to be another great year!



Erica's Corner

by Erica Spurgeon

As we all begin to depart from our sites, one thing that we are all working on is the Sustainability

Binder. This binder acts as a guide to the next VISTA, showing them what worked, what didn't, who they should know, and just about everything else that you can imagine. However, as we put this binder together, or add to a previous VISTA's binder, we sometimes find ourselves stumped as to what to add. Here are a few suggestions that I found helpful, and the people who follow in your footsteps will probably find useful as well!

1. Contact information for everyone you have met and interacted with.

This doesn't just include their name, email, and phone number. This should also include hidden assets and even personality types. For those of you who work in a school, get a yearbook! This way, when a new VISTA comes, they will know exactly who they are looking for.

2. Funding information.

Make sure you keep close track of the grants you applied for. Also, keep track of the businesses you requested in-kind donations from. This will save the new VISTAs a lot of time!

3. Event notifications.

Saving flyers, handouts, and postcards of past events can help VISTAs figure out what you did and how to reach out to the community. Make note of effective each event was. Is sending a flyer best, or is making a phone call?

4. How effective were you?

Make note of each event, meeting, etc. and share how effective it was. Sharing this information with a VISTA can give them a heads up on whether an event will work, or what could be done differently. Let them learn from your successes and your mistakes.

I know that as the days near our end date we have other things on our mind, such as new jobs, school, and even moving. But remember what your first day was like with DPI and try to make sure the next VISTA at your site has an even better experience than you did!

Recipe of the Month: Apple Brickle Dip

By Sara Byrnes

Ingredients:

1 8 oz. package of cream cheese (softened)
1/2 cup packed brown sugar
1/4 cup sugar
1 tsp. vanilla
1 pkg. Heath Bar bits
3 medium tart apples, sliced
(soak apples in lemon juice to avoid browning, if leaving out for an extended period)

1. In a bowl, mix the cream cheese, brown sugar, sugar, and vanilla.
2. Fold the Heath Bar bits into the mixture.
3. Serve with apples.

Sara says, "This recipe is easy to make, doesn't require cooking, and serves a bunch of people if you need to make it for a potluck or event."

Sara also suggest using Splenda white and brown sugar for a healthier version!



"Hey! That's a good idea!"

Angela Rumsey, VISTA with Milwaukee Public Schools, recently began developing a "quick guide" to district parent involvement opportunities and committees. This one-stop comprehensive resource will be distributed at various meetings at the beginning of the school year and will be available in the parent info center.

COMMUNICATING

Brittany Williams, VISTA with the Wisconsin Educational Opportunity Program, helped organize the WEOP's Family and Community Fun Night, put on by the Youth Leadership Board and the Parent Advisory Board. Over 100 people attended the event, with some receiving door prizes donated from locations like Chipotle, PDQ, Culver's, and Badger Bowl.

COLLABORATING

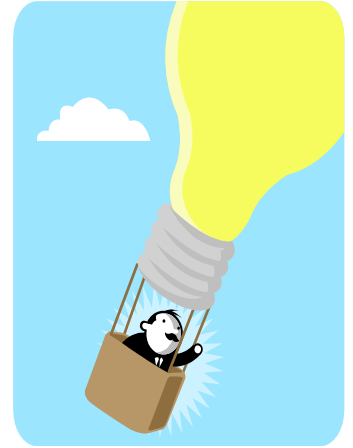
Tracy Steffens, VISTA with Washington Elementary in Oshkosh, is collecting information for public assistance programs and family-friendly community programs for the school's Family Resource Center. These resources will be accessible to all families, especially to the low-income families in the community.

PARENTING

Jim Handorf, VISTA with the Madison Public Library, has secured three new partnerships and outreach sites for the library's job-help program. These sites will allow resources to be more accessible to community members.

EMPLOYMENT AND JOB SKILLS TRAINING

Heather Knops, VISTA with the Shiocton Public Library, has been working with library staff to clean



up the flower garden and butterfly house in preparation for the rest of the summer, also collecting and raising monarch caterpillars and getting vegetable garden together. These efforts have shown how engaging community-centered libraries can be in their efforts to promote healthy minds and bodies.

HEALTH AND NUTRITION



Best Wishes to Stephanie and Sylvia!

By Pen Bruskin



While many of us are looking to turn the final corner into the last few months of our service, a few of our fellow VISTAs are just about done with their year-long terms. With this in mind, I wanted to take a second to thank Sylvia and Stephanie for their passion, dedication, and all around great work this year!

Just a few highlights of what they've done this year: Sylvia concentrated many of her efforts on working with A.C. Kiefer's PTO to increase the leadership and involvement opportunities for parents in the program. She has also done a great job planning events, collaborating with partners, and securing a large number of donations for the Wausau Early Childhood Program. Through all of her efforts, Sylvia has made sure to pass along the importance of sustainability in her programs, which will continue to help her site long after she has completed her year of service with us! Stephanie has worked hard to increase the capacity of the district to engage families, staff and community members in the Longfellow and West Milwaukee Action Teams! These ATPs have taken it upon themselves to collaboratively plan numerous events this year for their

schools. Stephanie has also used community and school assets to make school materials and events accessible to Spanish-speaking families. As she finishes up her service, Stephanie is concentrating on helping the school's Spring Clean Up and Planting events that will be happening throughout the summer!

We also wanted to make sure to wish them well on all their future plans:

Stephanie received the William J. Clinton Fellowship for Service for her 10-month program in India where she'll be working on improving quality and access to education for marginalized communities in India! Afterwards, she's thinking of applying for international public policy graduate programs.

Sylvia is gearing up for a second year of VISTA service at the Mile High Youth Corps in Colorado Springs, CO where she will be working on outreach and recruitment for conservation and green jobs!

Thank you both so much for all you have done this year! It has been our honor and pleasure to have you in our DPI VISTA community.



VISTA Turns 45!!

By Erica Spurgeon

In 1965, President Johnson launched VISTA (Volunteers in Service to America) as part of the War on Poverty. Since then, over 175,000 Americans have been devoting their lives to working in low-income communities to help eliminate poverty. VISTAs have helped create programs such as Head Start and Upward Bound, and last year, AmeriCorps VISTA members secured over \$100 million in resources. Even though VISTAs have to live on a modest stipend, this does not effect their passion, commitment, and hard work. Help celebrate VISTA's anniversary by doing the following 10 things:

1. Help us spread the word! Paste this link in an email to your friends that served as VISTAs:
www.vistacampus.org.
2. Update your contact information on MyAmeriCorps.gov (if you haven't already).
3. Share your story of service!
4. Become a fan of VISTA Alumni on Facebook.
5. Order a retro VISTA t-shirt, and help your hipster image.
(https://www.nationalservicegear.com/catalog/category_view.php?category_id=10)
6. Share a photo of yourself in your new retro VISTA t-shirt, or your favorite photo from your days of service on the "V is for" Flickr page.
7. Attend a celebration event in your area. Download the 45th Anniversary Schedule Events at
<http://www.vistacampus.org/mod/resource/view.php?id=1439>.
8. Serve again! Explore options with Senior Corps or another AmeriCorps program.
9. Help us recruit! Attend a career/job fair and represent AmeriCorps VISTA.
10. Volunteer. Visit www.serve.gov for opportunities in your community.

VISTA to VISTA with Lizzy Lowrey and Erica Spurgeon



Lizzy Lowrey is currently serving at the Racine Public Library in Racine, WI

Erica: If you were stranded on an island, what three things (no people) would you want to have?

Lizzy: A boat, a two-way radio, and a bottle of rum. (The boat and a two-way radio to get me off the island, and the rum because it goes best with coconut.)

Erica: What will you take away from your VISTA experience?

Lizzy: I figure if I can do this, I can do anything.

Erica: Who is the coolest person you know?

Lizzy: My grandma was the coolest person I knew. She was a tiny little Catholic with the mouth of a sailor and a penchant for travel. I have yet to meet anyone cooler.

Erica: If you could hop on a plane and go anywhere right now, where would you go?

Lizzy: Tom Selleck's avocado farm.

Erica: What is your favorite food?

Lizzy: I don't have a favorite food, but I would sell my first-born for a good, hearty breakfast.

Erica: What animal would you be and why?

Lizzy: I would be a squirrel because they know how to party!



Erica: When you're not saving the world, what's your favorite movie to watch?

Lizzy: "Three Men and a Baby."

Erica: Would you rather always lose or never play?

Lizzy: I guess never play because I. Don't. Lose.



Erica Spurgeon is currently serving with the Howe Neighborhood Family Resource Center in Green Bay, WI

Lizzy: If you could be any Muppet, which one would you be and why?

Erica: Miss Piggy. She is fashionable, loves to eat, and has great self-confidence!

Lizzy: What is your favorite shape?

Erica: A circle. It's easy on the eyes.

Lizzy: What's your motto?

Erica: "Whatever floats your boat and doesn't sink mine."

Lizzy: What are your plans for life after VISTA?

Erica: Get a "big people" job, whatever that means. My ultimate life plan is to be president in 2024.

Lizzy: If you could be on any crime-fighting TV show, which one would you choose?

Erica: Does Judge Judy count? She's my hero!



Lizzy: What would you do if you were the last person on earth?

Erica: Scavenge for food after I slept in and spent the day tanning at the lake.

Lizzy: What's your theme song?

Erica: Journey's "Don't Stop Believin'"

Lizzy: Who do you want to meet?

Erica: Michelle Obama. She's so fashionable and proper.

Lizzy: If you could be any kind of cupcake, what would you be and why?

Erica: Funfetti with funfetti frosting, because I'm super fun!

Lizzy: What are you wearing (right now)?

Erica: Clothes that paint, sequins, and glue can get on!

DPI VISTA Summer Retreat

Come celebrate the end of your service with food and fun!

July 16

10a–4p

Devil's Lake State Park—Shagbark Shelter (on the south shore)

Please RSVP to Kristine Nadolski by July 1
(knadolsk@wausau.k12.wi.us)

Indicate if you have any dietary restrictions

Cultivating Commitment

By Nancy Cedar, VISTA Supervisor in the Wausau School District

Building and sustaining commitment grows within people over time. The goal for the Wausau School District VISTA project in the 2010-2011 school year is to cultivate commitment in our organizational structure in order to sustain our Family University Network in the years to come without the leadership of a VISTA. People commit to a group or organization because they gain something important from their involvement. We want to broaden and define our Action Team with people who share a common interest and are willing to roll up their sleeves to make it happen. The transition in the VISTA from this year to the next will focus on increased empowerment and ownership through a clearly defined committee structure to successfully build upon this year's initiatives. I thought it might be helpful to share what we see as guiding principals for our incoming VISTA as we pass the torch from Kristine Nadolski to Amanda Vandehey.

These tips are adapted from the Community Toolbox, a publication of the US Department of Human Services, Office of the Assistant Secretary for Planning and Evaluation.

1. Welcome people into your organization.

People involved in the planning process should understand that welcoming is a job to be taken seriously.

2. Be open and clear about the mission, principles, and goals of your organization.

People have to know specifically what they are committing to. Make sure that everyone is familiar with the program's mission, goals, and committee structure.

3. Model commitment yourself.

Everyone looks to the leader, or leaders, of a group or project to see if they are committed. If they can count on you, it is more likely that you can count on them. Commitment is contagious. People need to feel that they are making a significant contribution in order to feel committed. Make them personally accountable for some aspect of the planning process. This not only encourages their involvement—assigning responsibility also increases the probability that the project will get done.

4. Pick out the right level of challenge for people.

People need to feel successful and they also need to stretch their abilities. As you get to know them better, give them gradually increasing challenges. Being challenged helps keep people excited about the work that they are doing. Sometimes people will need encouragement to try things they have never done before. Be careful about giving them too much to do though. Remember, they are volunteers.

5. Build an organizational culture of mutual appreciation and respect.

People need to feel respected and appreciated in order to stay connected and committed to any group or organization. Help people in your planning group to notice what is going well, rather than just noticing what needs to be improved. When you listen to others with respect, they sense that you have confidence in them and are interested in what they think. In turn, your interest and confidence helps them to think clearly and creatively. Taking action on what is heard is also important. Demonstrate that you have listened and will take action.

6. Support people's leadership.

To help sustain commitment in your group's initiatives, think about each person as a potential leader and train him or her to lead. If people view themselves as a leader, they will view the group as their own. They will have a feeling of ownership and will be more likely to take initiative to make sure that things work well. Help people to recognize their leadership talents and encourage them to try out different roles.

7. Celebrate.

Don't forget to celebrate. Any excuse will do. Remember, commitment grows when people have fun and play together too! In our office we do "The Smarty Pants Dance." For more information on that, go to:

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=6biwB9B18gU>.



July VISTA Events

SUN	MON	TUE	WED	THU	FRI	SAT
				1	2	3
4	5	6	7	8	9	10
11	12 Howe FRC "Blast from the Past" - Green Bay Art in Action @ Fond du Lac Public Library—Fond du Lac	13 Howe FRC "Blast from the Past" - Green Bay Art in Action @ Fond du Lac Public Library—Fond du Lac	14 Howe FRC "Blast from the Past" - Green Bay Art in Action @ Fond du Lac Public Library—Fond du Lac	15 Howe FRC "Blast from the Past" - Green Bay Art in Action @ Fond du Lac Public Library—Fond du Lac	16 Howe FRC "Blast from the Past" - Green Bay VISTA Retreat @ Devil's Lake 10a–4p	17
18	19 Howe FRC "Order Up"- Green Bay Art in Action @ Fond du Lac Public Library—Fond du Lac	20 Howe FRC "Order Up"- Green Bay Art in Action @ Fond du Lac Public Library—Fond du Lac	21 Howe FRC "Order Up"- Green Bay Art in Action @ Fond du Lac Public Library—Fond du Lac	22 Howe FRC "Order Up"- Green Bay Art in Action @ Fond du Lac Public Library—Fond du Lac	23 Howe FRC "Order Up"- Green Bay	24
25	26 Camp Invention @ Thomas Jefferson Elementary—Wausau 8:00a–4:00p	27 Camp Invention @ Thomas Jefferson Elementary—Wausau 8:00a–4:00p	28 Camp Invention @ Thomas Jefferson Elementary—Wausau 8:00a–4:00p	29 Camp Invention @ Thomas Jefferson Elementary—Wausau 8:00a–4:00p	30	31

EVENT CONTACTS

- For more information on events in Wausau, contact Kristine Nadolski at knadolsk@wausau.k12.wi.us.
- For more information on events with the Howe Family Resource Center, contact Erica Spurgeon at spurgeoe@uwgb.edu.
- For more information on events at the Fond du Lac Public Library, contact Josh Cowles at cowles@fdlpl.org.

"There are two ways of spreading light: to be the candle or the mirror that reflects it."

Edith Wharton

Grant Opportunities

Open Meadows Foundation: Grants for Women and Girls

The Open Meadows Foundation is a grant-making organization for projects that are led by and benefit women and girls. It funds projects that reflect the diversity of the community served by the project in both its leadership and organization; that build community power; that promote racial, social, economic, and environmental justice; and that have limited financial access or have encountered obstacles in their search for funding. Maximum award: \$2,000. Eligibility: 501(c)3 organizations with an organizational budget no larger than \$150,000. Projects must be designed and implemented by women and girls.

Deadline: August 14, 2010
www.openmeadows.org

Siemens/College Board: 2010 Siemens Competition

The Siemens Competition seeks to promote excellence by encouraging students to undertake individual or team research projects. It fosters intensive research that improves students' understanding of the value of scientific study and informs their consideration of future careers in mathematics, science, engineering, and technology. Maximum award: \$100,000. Eligibility: high school students who are

U.S. citizens or permanent residents.

Deadline: October 1, 2010

www.collegeboard.com/siemens/

LEGO: LEGO Smart Creativity Contest

LEGO Education is inviting K-12 teachers and home educators from across the United States to register as contestants for the 2010 LEGO Smart Creativity Contest, challenging classrooms coast to coast to become LEGO Smart. Maximum award: a LEGO Education gift certificate, LEGO Smart gift valued at \$500, and recognition. Eligibility: legal residents of the United States employed or working within the education field (K-12) at time of entry.

Deadline: pre-registration by July 30, 2010.

www.legoeducation.us/about/item.aspx?art=3465&bhpc=1



ASCD: Outstanding Young Educator Award

The Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development is seeking nominations for its Outstanding Young Educator Award, which recognizes a

teacher under the age of 40 who demonstrates excellence in his or her profession, a positive impact on students, creativity in the classroom, and leadership in his or her school or district. Maximum award: \$10,000; an all-expenses paid trip to the ASCD annual conference in March for the winner and one companion, including registration, travel, hotel, and meals. Eligibility: pre K-12 teachers under age 40; no self-nominations accepted.

Deadline: August 1, 2010
www.ascd.org/programs/Outstanding-Young-Educator-Award/Outstanding-Young-Educator-Award-Program.aspx

Wild Ones: Lorrie Otto Seeds for Education Grant Program

The Lorrie Otto Seeds for Education Grant Program gives small monetary grants to schools, nature centers, or other non-profit educational organizations for the purpose of establishing outdoor learning centers. Funds will be provided only for the purchase of native plants and seed. Eligibility: schools, nature centers, and other nonprofit and not-for-profit places of learning, including houses of worship. Deadline: October 15, 2010
www.for-wild.org/seedmony.htm

Vernier/NSTA: Technology Awards

The Vernier/NSTA Technology Awards promote the innovative use of data-collection technology using a computer, graphing calculator, or other handheld de



vice in the science classroom. Maximum award: \$1,000 in cash for the teacher, \$1,000 in Vernier Products, and up to \$1,000 toward expenses to attend the annual NSTA National Convention. Eligibility: Current teachers of science in grades K-College.

Deadline: November 30, 2010
www.vernier.com/grants/nsta.html

American Legion Child Welfare Foundation: Grants to Help Children

American Legion Child Welfare Foundation Grants to Help Children fund proposals that aim to contribute to the physical, mental, emotional, and spiritual welfare of children through innovative organizations and/or their programs designed to benefit youth. Maximum award: varies. Eligibility: 501(c)3 organizations.

Deadline: July 15, 2010
www.cwf-inc.org/grantseekers/overview